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How To Fire Decisively

Firing an employee is never easy, but these tips can make showing an employee the door a less daunting task.

From: [Inc, October 2004](#) | Page 90 By: Patrick J. Sauer **Illustrations by:** Ed Fotheringham

It is no manager's favorite part of the job -- or it shouldn't be, anyway -- but firing an employee is inevitable in the life of a growing company. And more often than not, you're dumping a nice chap who simply doesn't pull his weight. Deborah Keary, who fields firing queries for the Society for Human Resource Management, offers these tips:

- 1. Delegate!** A firing is an HR moment of truth, so don't feel bad about leaning heavily on your HR manager -- it's why that person is on the payroll. An effective HR chief should work with you to compare the employee's track record with the job description, written expectations, and company policy in order to bolster your case. There should also be a sense of checks and balances. It is HR's duty to ensure that terminations are for solid reasons, not just because you happen to be pissed off that day.
- 2. Say it with a file.** "Document, document, document," says Keary.
- 3. Remain calm and courteous.** When you call the employee in, always have another executive in the room to act as a witness and a buffer. Don't get confrontational, don't raise your voice, and don't create a scene by having security guards escort someone out of the building with his belongings in a cardboard box. That embarrasses everyone.
- 4. Offer parting gifts.** It might sound back-assward to reward someone you just fired, but you should offer him severance: a month's salary or a week's pay for every year he was employed with you, plus outplacement services. Word will spread around the office that you are generous and fair.
- 5. Never speak of the matter again.** Fire on a Friday. Come Monday, send out a simple e-mail to the staff. Then, drop it. "Even if you are in the right, don't join in the rumors," says Keary. Privacy is essential, she adds, because termination lawsuits are awfully common. And justifying the action is usually unnecessary. Even if the employee was the heart and soul of office happy hours, most of his co-workers will understand.

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